

Ellis Island

Education Department

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Ellis Island Immigration Museum
Statue of Liberty National Monument
New York, NY 10004



Interviewee: Emilie (Milca) Vapenik Valenta
Date of Birth: SEPTEMBER 28, 1907
Date of Interview: MAY 1, 1995
Interviewer: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR.
Immigrated from Czechoslovakia in 1923 at Age 16
Ellis Island Collection: EI-610

SIGRIST: Were there any other celebrations during the year that you that stick out in your mind?

VALENTA: Yes, first of May we made like a pole and all the girls and boys dressed and we had streamers. We hold the streamers and we dance all around it, you know. And I don't remember the song either what we, what we sang because if you don't sing it all the time or talk about it, you forget about it. And I didn't have no neighbors here to keep up my Czech language. (she laughs) But I'm trying to just remember what I can, yes. But, that was a festive, you know, the first of May, yes. And, of course, like fourth of July, we celebrate sixth of July and that was different, too.

SIGRIST: What does that signify?

VALENTA: Ah, that signified that, uh, make the country strong. That's a month that we should celebrate, it's summer, and brings everything that we could have like good food, good field grows up and everything, and we, we could have it like harvesting almost. And then we not afraid of anything. We will be strong, so we used to sing (*she sings in Czech*). That's, we had a gymnast, we were gymnast, Czech people. And they, that's, uh, gymnast is a strong mind and healthy body, and this is the song about it. That we, we could be strong. We're not afraid, you know.